

People's Health Movement (PHM) condemns the attack on Health Works Committee in Palestine by Israeli Occupation Forces

People's Health Movement (PHM) strongly condemns the [raid](#) on the Health Work Committee (HWC) office in Ramallah in the early morning hours of March 8, 2021 by Israeli Armed Occupying Forces (IOF). HWC is a Palestinian non-governmental organization working in health and community development. It currently serves as the regional coordinating organization of the PHM in the Middle East and North Africa.

Health Work Committee has been working in occupied Palestine, providing services and ensuring equitable access across the West Bank, for the past 36 years. Its mobile clinics in "Area C" and "H2" in the city of Hebron provide essential services to vulnerable communities responding to Palestinians needs who are heavily targeted by IOF and the Israeli occupying forces.

According to the [statement by HWC](#) released after the said incident- "The Israeli occupying forces raided the whole premises, tampering with all the belongings of staff and office furniture. They stayed at the premises for over two hours, leaving behind doors and locks destroyed, confiscating 10 hard disks after dismantling electronic devices, in addition 3 laptops and numerous essential work files were also found missing." The attacks resulted in hefty damages. In addition, IOF detained Mr. Tayseer Abu Shalbak, an employee of HWC whose fate remains uncertain.

Decades of colonization and annexation policies, military occupation and apartheid rule have undermined the democratic space in which Palestinian civil society organizations operate. It is commonplace that organizations such as HWC are targeted by the occupation authorities. This raid comes on top of repeated attempts to delegitimize and criminalize their humanitarian and basic human rights work in the occupied Palestinian territory.

PHM has long been pointing out the impact of war, conflict and occupation not only because these are determinants of health and the vulnerability of those affected, but also due to the level of conflict and displacement occurring around the world, with one in seven people in the world living in fragile or conflict-affected countries (Curtis, 2019), and almost 80 million people forcibly displaced (UN News, 2020).

Besides the regular attacks on Palestinians, including women and children, the Israeli occupying forces show another ugly face while practicing a new form of racism, vaccination apartheid ([link1](#), [link2](#)) in occupied Palestine. With such actions the Israeli occupying forces violate UN Human Rights Conventions while there is a deep silence from the international community. In such a scenario, this type of attack on an organization involved in health and human rights work, including the fight against the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic in occupied Palestine, becomes even more reprehensible. Clearly such acts are intended to intimidate the organization and obstruct their humanitarian and human rights work, where time and again they have been pointing out the human rights violations committed by the Israeli forces. Additionally, there is another dimension, where [Healthcare has often been 'weaponized'](#) during armed conflicts, with parties to the conflict interfering with or violently attacking health facilities and personnel for their own strategic ends.

The current pandemic has [given rise](#) to authoritarian measures by governments all across the world which need to be monitored and opposed by the civil society. At the same time, we need to learn lessons from the last year and the ongoing pandemic to act on the principles of solidarity, peace and reconciliation and democratic values. In this spirit, PHM demands the international community to take all measures to stop these practices of the Israeli Occupying Forces and hold them accountable to the international and human rights principles and treaties. Ultimately, PHM shares the Palestinian people's dream where the international community obligates Israel's occupying forces to **END THE OCCUPATION, AND FREE PALESTINE!!**

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This statement was drafted by the PHM's thematic group on War, Conflict, Occupation and Forced Migration and endorsed by PHM Steering Committee.